

Healthy BC

Building a roadmap for healthcare renewal in BC



SONIA
FURSTENAU
Leading the BC greens



Sonia Furstenau, Leader of the BC Green Party, MLA for Cowichan Valley

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INTRODUCTION

bcgreens.ca/healthcare

Under the leadership of Sonia Furstenau, the BC Green Party has focused considerable attention on our healthcare system and public health policies. This focus stems from a belief that the government's ultimate role is to support the health and wellbeing of its citizens.

The scale of issues facing healthcare in BC is massive. The BC NDP government has made some limited steps toward addressing issues in our public healthcare system. However, their efforts have been hindered by a lack of vision and urgency. This has meant that public health outcomes have not improved under the BC NDP.

Over the last three years, the BC Green Party has worked with researchers, healthcare providers, professional bodies, advocacy groups, and patients to create a map for effective healthcare reform in BC. This booklet is a living document that serves as a summary of that work. As we continue to engage stakeholders, it will be revised with new insights, best practices and up-to-date research. You can find more information about our work on healthcare at bcgreens.ca/healthcare.

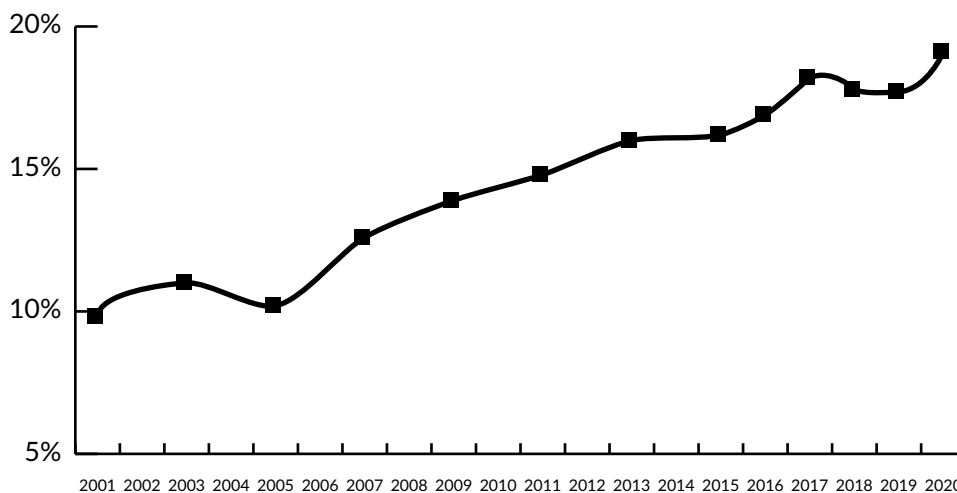


PRIMARY CARE

bcgreens.ca/primary_care

An on-going, long-term relationship with a family doctor is the cornerstone of our public healthcare system. Yet, the primary care system itself has proven to be unsustainable for family physicians in the 21st century.

Percentage of British Columbians without a family doctor, 2001-2020^{1 2}



Family practices are shutting their doors, because our model for primary care requires physicians to be responsible for managing their small business (ie: their clinic), and providing care for their patients. Family doctors are burning out, shifting to the private sector or other specialties, and retiring early. New doctors are less and less likely to choose family medicine, opting instead for specializations with sustainable expectations and support. This has left nearly one million British Columbians without a family doctor.³

BC Greens are working hard to:

- ✓ Secure short-term financial support for family practices to keep existing family practices open
- ✓ Create the infrastructure for management staff who can run primary care clinics, while doctors focus on patient care
- ✓ Prioritize the rapid deployment of team-based care across BC, including infrastructure for management staff
- ✓ Update the family physician payment model to incentivize family practice and properly support the work of doctors
- ✓ Restore the equity of our public system by providing accessible healthcare services to everyone, and ensuring private healthcare companies do not operate at the expense of certain demographics

The current fee-for-service model is turning prospective doctors away from family practice and British Columbians are the ones bearing the burden.

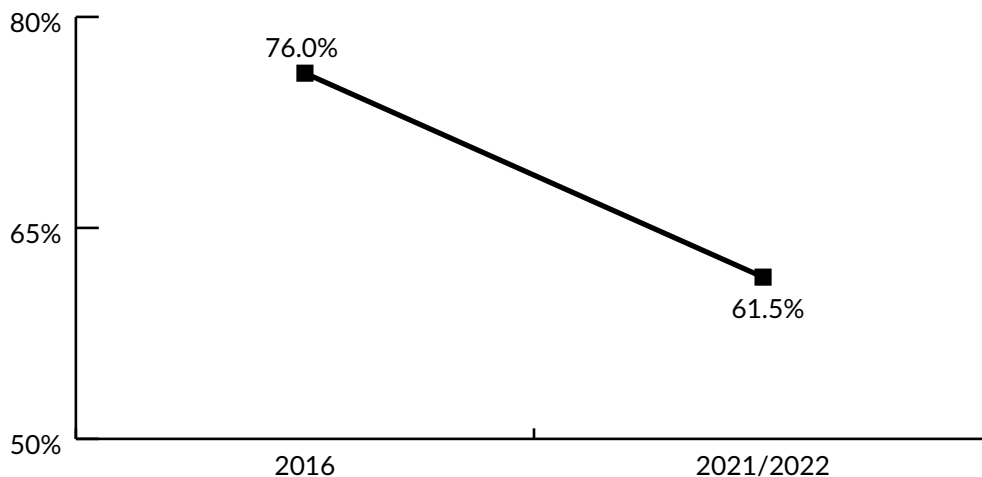
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MENTAL HEALTHCARE

bcgreens.ca/mental_healthcare

In 2020, the UN warned that the COVID-19 pandemic was leading to a mental health crisis around the world.⁴ In the one-year period since then, the proportion of adults affected by depression, anxiety, or PTSD has increased from 21% to 25% of the general population.⁵ In other words, mental health continues to decline among Canadians.

British Columbians who have a hopeful view of the future, 2016-2022⁶



We do not currently have the resources to adequately care for British Columbians' mental health. Like many other issues plaguing our healthcare system, this is partly an equity issue. Data clearly shows that lack of access to mental healthcare is most pronounced in those with lower incomes, and fewer years of education, as well as among vulnerable and minority groups.^{7 8 9} We need to invest in mental health services where cost is not a barrier to seeking help.

BC Greens are working hard to:

- ✓ Create a publicly-funded, universal mental healthcare system, starting with a one-year pilot project providing six sessions with a psychologist in primary care clinics, which would provide better wraparound care for all patients and less work for family doctors
- ✓ Regulate counsellors and therapists to provide accountability and oversight for the profession in anticipation of including them in the universal mental healthcare system at a later stage
- ✓ Close legal loopholes that exclude social workers from being part of the healthcare system

Mental health care is failing at all levels, from early intervention for children and youth through to tertiary care for adults with complex psychological problems.

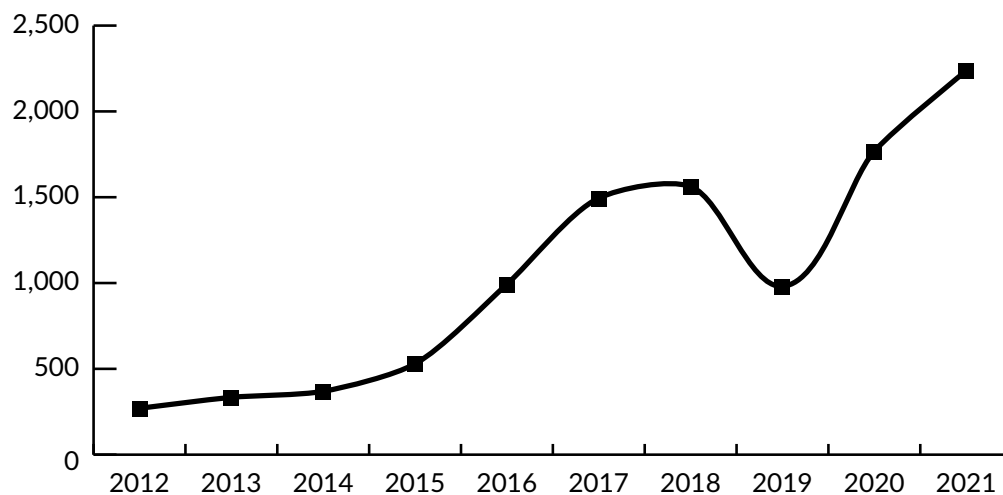
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POISONED DRUG CRISIS

bcgreens.ca/poisoned_drugs

From January 1, 2012 to March 31, 2022, 11,085 British Columbians died from illicit drug toxicity.¹⁰ On average, six people die everyday due to poisoned drugs.

Deaths from illicit drug toxicity, 2012-2021¹¹



Historically, illicit drugs have been treated as a criminal issue. The truth is that illicit drugs are used by a wide segment of the population for a variety of reasons. Not all people who use drugs are addicted. People who use drugs do not all look the same; they lead diverse lives. At root, use of illicit drugs is a medical / mental health issue unique to each individual. Our approach to illicit drugs must be based in this perspective.

BC Greens are working hard to:

- ✓ Ensure there is an accessible, effective, and regulated safe supply of drugs so that no more British Columbians die from poisonous drugs
- ✓ Reduce stigma and other barriers that keep people from seeking support
- ✓ Create a comprehensive set of recommendations to address the poisoned drug crisis through the all-party legislative committee on health

Indigenous people accounted for 15% of all illicit drug deaths in 2020, five times more than their share of the province's total population... These drug poisonings are another part of the legacy of trauma that Indigenous people have endured over generations.

Adam Olsen
MLA, Saanich North and the Islands

LESSONS FROM COVID-19

bcgreens.ca/covid19

The COVID-19 pandemic has changed the way we live, work, socialize, communicate and provide essential services. It has also exposed deep gaps and inequities in healthcare and our society writ large. BC Greens have spent the last two years drawing attention to these gaps and proposing solutions. Unfortunately, we have seen little progress.

While the pandemic continues, the BC NDP has shifted its approach from a responsibility for collective public health to individualized responsibility. This “everyone-on-their-own” approach is having far-reaching consequences, including marginalizing vulnerable populations, labour shortages, the declining health and safety of healthcare professionals, and entire sectors of the healthcare system shutting down for periods of time. At the same time, the BC NDP government has refused to provide regular, consistent data to support their decisions and equip British Columbians with the information they need to make informed decisions.

BC Greens are working hard to:

- ✓ Ensure British Columbians have access to adequate universal paid sick leave that matches the health outcomes and other standards in other OECD countries
- ✓ Support healthcare professionals who have borne, and continue to bear, the brunt of the COVID-19 pandemic
- ✓ Protect healthcare workers when they speak out about their working conditions
- ✓ Change the government's culture of withholding information and research that impacts the choices British Columbians make around their health and safety

There is consensus from the World Health Organization and Health Agency of Canada that COVID-19 is airborne. Guidance to the public about how to reduce risk of transmission of COVID should stem from this expert advice.

Sonia Furstenau
Leader, BC Green Party
MLA, Cowichan Valley

ENDNOTES

- 1 Statistics Canada. Table 13-10-0484-01 Access to a regular family physician
- 2 Statistics Canada. Table 13-10-0096-16 Has a regular healthcare provider, by age group
- 3 https://bccfp.bc.ca/wp-content/uploads/2022/04/BCCFP_2022_PositionPaper.pdf
- 4 <https://www.reuters.com/article/us-health-coronavirus-mentalhealth-idUSKBN22Q0AO>
- 5 <https://www150.statcan.gc.ca/n1/daily-quotidien/210927/dq210927a-eng.htm>
- 6 Statistics Canada. Canadian Social Survey (5354)—waves 2, 3 and 4 and 2016 General Social Survey (5221)
- 7 <https://www.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/pmc/articles/PMC2645130/>
- 8 <https://www.cdc.gov/nchs/products/databriefs/db380.htm#>
- 9 <https://www150.statcan.gc.ca/n1/pub/11-631-x/2020004/s3-eng.htm>
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- 19 https://bccfp.bc.ca/wp-content/uploads/2022/04/BCCFP_2022_PositionPaper.pdf

BC GREEN CAUCUS



Sonia Furstenau

Leader, BC Green Party | MLA, Cowichan Valley

Sonia Furstenau was elected as the MLA for Cowichan Valley in 2017 and 2020, and elected as the leader of the BC Green Party in 2020. She is the caucus House Leader, and sits on the Select Standing Committee on Health and the Legislative Assembly Management Committee.

Sonia's constituency work is focused on continued efforts to protect Cowichan Valley watersheds, facilitating conversation between government and community groups about child wellness, advocating for updated infrastructure in health and education, and supporting First Nations' leadership.

Prior to her election to the Legislature, Sonia served as Area B Director for the Cowichan Valley Regional District (CVRD) for three years, and as a teacher in Victoria and Shawnigan.

Sonia has long been involved in grassroots advocacy. She was National Administrator for Results Canada, a non-profit that works to end extreme poverty, and she served on the Board of Directors for Oikocredit, an international microcredit organization. Sonia was a volunteer with Citizens Climate Lobby, which is committed to finding solutions to the challenge of climate change.



Adam Olsen

MLA, Saanich North and the Islands

Adam Olsen was first elected as MLA for Saanich North and the Islands in 2017, and re-elected in 2020. He has served as the interim leader of the BC Green Party twice, from 2013-2015, and in 2020.

Adam is a former two-term Central Saanich Councilor and small business owner. He was born and raised on Tsartlip First Nation in Brentwood Bay and is a member of the Tsartlip First Nation.

He served as the Chair of Planning and Development and Water & Wastewater and represented the community on a number of boards and commissions including solid and liquid waste, Greater Victoria Public Library and the Regional Housing Trust Fund.

Adam and his wife Emily have two children, Silas and Ella. He routinely coaches his son's community soccer team and has led community efforts to protect and improve the Salish Sea and the Saanich Inlet.


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